WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A data package for holding an information request and corresponding response data, comprising

a plurality of layers, the layers including a routing layer and a client request layer respectively containing routing information and an information request,

the package being transmittable over a distributed network including a plurality of processing nodes and each layer being interpretable by only a subset of the processing nodes.

2. A package according to claim 1, wherein the layers further include at least one or more layer selected from a group containing client device information, user identification information, and application identification information.

3. A distributed network including a plurality of processing nodes each operative to interpret at least a respective one of the layers of the package of claim 1 and to add and/or remove layers before passing the package to another one of the nodes.

4. Apparatus for responding to an information request, comprising

means for providing an information request in a client device,

wrapping means for wrapping the information request in one or more layers to produce a request package,

transmitting means for transmitting the request package over a distributed network comprising a plurality of processing nodes,

means for adding and/or removing layers from the package at one or more of the nodes,

processing means for processing the package at its final destination, and

means for generating a response package for transmission back to the client device via the distributed network.

5.   Apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the means for generating the response package generates it to include said information request.

6.   A method of responding to an information request, comprising the steps of

providing an information request in a client device,

wrapping the information request in one or more layers to produce a request package,

transmitting the request package over a distributed network comprising a plurality of processing nodes,

adding and/or removing layers to or from the package at one or more of the nodes,

processing the package at its final destination, and

generating a response package for transmission back to the client device via the distributed network.